

Abstract

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Listen , be quiet and dwell on a neighborhood.  
Patershol Ghent



plotersgracht 1966



2007



1966



2007

The Patershol, a neighborhood in the centre of Ghent, consisting out of 13 streets and a square, is a popular medieval neighborhood. The Patershol 'survived' in the fifties-sixties, the modernist vision on urban renewal. The neighborhood next to the Patershol, the 'Groene Briel' was demolished in that period and renewed with social 'modernistic' apartments. Currently this is a rather neglected neighborhood. For the Patershol the city had at that time a plan to radically change the medieval fabric by wide streets and squares. Although the character of the neighborhood was more or less the same as it is now, in the spirit of the sixties the planners did not perceive this as a quality. In their perception the Patershol was a rather old fashioned neighborhood that needed to be 'modernised'.

The appreciation in the 'Critical seventies' for monuments and small scale ensured that the Patershol was renovated. What arguments were then used? Why was there suddenly again a sensitivity in favour to the medieval city fabric, while more then ever the neighborhood was really abandoned? How did the planners perceived the identity of the place?

In this research I was trying to understand how the perceived quality of a place is volatile and depends on the time spirit. The question arises whether the strength of the spatial identity (genius loci) ensured that this area was not demolished. Through cartographic explorations, photographic observations and interviews I wanted to understand why visions on the quality of the place changed throughout the years. By doing this I also tried to capture a small part of the specificity of the Patershol.

This is only a first step in a broader research on the specific identity of neighborhoods and on how this knowledge can help to develop place-bound projects.